eases, leprosy and T.B. In addition, a Group Insurance Scheme has also been introduced for providing financial support in case of death to the dependents of beedi workers.

निजी क्षेत्र में विकलांगों के लिए आरक्षण

2414. **श्री जनेश्वर मिश्र:** क्या सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या यह सच है कि "विकलांग दिवस" पर राष्ट्रीय विकलांग सम्मेलन में वक्ताओं ने मांग की है कि सरकार को विकलांगों के लिए निजी क्षेत्र में भी आरक्षण की व्यवस्था करके उनके साथ न्याय करना चाहिए; और

(ख) यदि हां, तो इस संबंध में सरकार का क्या रवैया है?

सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय की राज्य मंत्री (श्रीमती मेनका गांधी): (क) सामाजिक न्याय और अधिकारिता मंत्रालय को इस संबंध में कोई सूचना नहीं मिली है।

(ख) प्रश्न नहीं उठता।

Rehabilitation of Widows in Vrindavan

2415. SHRI SOLIPETA RAMA CHANDRA REDDY: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the approximate number of widows living in Vrindavan for their livelihood;

(b) the measures proposed to look into their welfare in old ages; and

(c) the steps proposed to grant them maintenance allowance or pension for their livelihood or to rehabilitate them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Cabinet Committee for Social Justice and Empowerment

2416. CHAUDHARY CHUNNILAL: Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) when was the Cabinet Committee for Social Justice and Empowerment constituted;

(b) whether meetings of this Committee have been held regularly; and

(c) if so, how many meetings have been held; if not, what are the reasons for conspicuous irregularity having been committed in respect of such an important matter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) No Cabinet Committee with the nomenclature "Cabinet Committee for Social Justice and Empowerment" has been constituted.

(b) and (c) Question do not arise.

Identification of senior citizen

2417. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI: SHRI PARAG CHALIHA:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) the cut off age for a person to be identified as a senior citizen/elderly person;

(b) the population of elder persons in India as on 1st January, 1998; and

(c) the details of steps taken/being taken to provide social security, medical, journeys and other facilities vis-a-vis International year to the elderly people?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) It may not be practical to prescribe a uniform age beyond which persons are treated as older persons. Government officials retire at

the age of 60; old age pension is given at 65 years to destitute elderly and Railways give the facility of concessional fare to those 60 years and above age. The Ministry's own scheme for the elderly identifies as Senior Citizens those 60 years and above age.

(b) As per the latest census of 1991 the number of people above the age of 60 years in the country was 56.68 million.

(c) The Government has a number of ongoing programmes which seek to provide relief and assistance to senior citizens including provision of Old Age Pension for destitute older persons, travel related concessions, Old Age Homes, day care centres and mobile medicare units. A National Policy for Older Persons is under consideration of the Government. The Policy will seek to ensure the well being of older persons by attending to their social security, health care, welfare and other developmental needs.

News-item 'Changing values: coping ageing with dignity

2418. SHRI AKHILESH DAS:
SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA:
SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Changing values: coping ageing with dignity" appeared in the Samachar Bureau of New Delhi dated August 30, 1998;

(b) if so, how far the ageing population above 65 in India has been increasing in terms of percentage of the total population over the last five years; and

(c) the steps already taken and being taken to ensure due security and dignity of life for the aged in India?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) to (c) The information is being collected and will be placed on the Table of the House.

Tardy implementation of NSLRS

2419. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI:
SHRI PARAG CHALIHA:

Will the Minister of SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether implementation of National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers is very tardy;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor, Statewise;

(c) the total number of scavengers identified in the States as also those still to be rehabilitated; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to rehabilitate all the identified scavengers within time frame?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EMPOWERMENT (SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

(c) Total number of scavengers identified in the States is 5,77,228 and according to the information available with this Ministry, approximately 2,66,723 scavengers are to be rehabilited.

(d) The Government has established National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (NSKFDC) to provide financial assistance to scavengers to take up projects as per lending guidelines of this Corporation. A National Scheme of Liberation and Rehabilitation of Scavengers is in operation since March, 1992. The Government have also set up a Statutory National Commission for Safai Karamcharis. A Low-cost sanitation scheme for Liberation of scavengers by conversion of existing dry latrines into sanitary latrines and construction of new sanitary latrines where no latrines exist, is being implemented by Ministry of Urban Affairs and Employment.